

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 3711

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CO

SUBJECT: PRESS REPORTS AND OFFICIAL STATEMENT CONCERNING ALLEGED
FBI ACTIVITIES IN COLOMBIA

CARACAS FOR LEGAL ATTACHE

SUMMARY : A NUMBER OF ARTICLES HAVE APPEARED RECENTLY IN THE
COLOMBIAN PRESS ALLUDING TO THE PERVASIVE EFFORTS BY FBI AGENTS
WORKING TO COMBAT ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFICKING IN COLOMBIA. ONE
ARTICLE WARNED COLOMBIANS THAT THEIR EVERY MOVE IS MONITORED
BY UBIQUITOUS AND WELL- FINANCED FBI AGENTS, WHILE ANOTHER DESCRIBED
THE PENETRATION BY FBI AGENTS OF THE PORT OF BUENAVENTURA.
A LEADING PAPER QUOTED ONE OF THE AGENTS TO THE EFFECT THAT
BUENAVENTURA IS A CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRAFFICKING AND
COULD TAKE OVER THE ROLE ONCE PLAYED BY MARSEILLE OR MOROCCO.
THE COLOMBIAN PORT AUTHORITY MANAGER IN BUENAVENTURA MADE A
STATEMENT QUESTIONING THE PROPRIETY OF THE ACTIVITIES ATTRIBUTED
TO FBI AGENTS. THE AGENTS IN QUESTION WERE ACTUALLY PRIVATE
INSURANCE INVESTIGATORS . END SUMMMARY.
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1. ON APRIL 22, THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF ARTICLES CONCERNING
FBI EFFORTS TO CONTROL THE ELICIT DRUG TRAFFIC FROM COLOMBIA
TO THE UNITED STATES APPEARED IN THE LOCAL LIBERAL DAILY EL
TIEMPO. THE ARTICLE DESCRIBED COLOMBIA AS THE KEY COUNTRY

FOR INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRAFFIC TO THE UNITED STATES AND POINTED OUT THE INCREASING DOMESTIC DRUG PROBLEM RESULTING FROM THIS "ENORMOUS SATURATION OF NARCOTICS". THE HIGH LEVEL OF CONCERN IN THE U. S. ABOUT THE DRUG PROBLEM HAS LED TO THE INTRODUCTION OF U. S. FEDERAL NARCOTICS AGENTS IN COLOMBIA ON THE BASIS OF BILATERAL AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THESE U. S. NARCOTICS AGENTS WORK CLOSELY WITH THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE DEPT OF SECURITY.

2. THE ARTICLE WENT ON TO DESCRIBE OPERATIONS BY "FBI" AGENTS IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO GET THE TOP TRAFFICKERS. COLOMBIAN CITIZENS MUST ALSO FREQUENTLY SUBMIT TO MINUTE SEARCHES UPON ENTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES. A COLOMBIAN LAWYER WHO IS ACTIVE IN DEFENDING ARRESTED DRUG TRAFFICKERS IS QUOTED TO THE EFFECT THAT U. S. FEDERAL AGENTS HAVE BEEN GIVEN CARTE BLANCHE IN COLOMBIA TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES OF COLOMBIAN CITIZENS.

3. THE SECOND ARTICLE, WHICH IS MUCH MORE SENSATIONAL, APPEARED IN THE AFTERNOON INDEPENDENT TABLOID EL BOGOTANO (MORE NOTED FOR ITS CURVACIOUS NUDES THAN OBJECTIVE JOURNALISM) ON APRIL 24. THIS ARTICLE DESCRIBED THE SURVEILLANCE OF COLOMBIAN CITIZENS IN COLOMBIA BY NUMEROUS, OMNIPRESENT AND WELL- FINANCED AGENTS OF THE NARCOTICS DIVISION (STC) OF THE FBI. IT REPORTED THAT FBI AGENTS OPERATE IN COLOMBIA USING EVERY IMAGINABLE DISGUISE, INCLUDING THAT OF DRUG TRAFFICKERS AND DESCRIBED THE FBI AGENTS IN COLOMBIA AS THE MOST COMPLETE NET OF SECRET AMERICAN AGENTS, OPERATING ONLY PARTIALLY WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES. AGENTS ARE REPORTED TO BE OPERATING IN BOGOTA, BARRANQUILLA, BUENAVENTURA, CALI AND MEDELLIN. THE ARTICLE WENT ON TO ATTRIBUTE 80 PERCENT OF THE ARRESTS OF COLOMBIANS IN THE U. S. IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS TO EFFORTS BY THESE FBI AGENTS AND ATTRIBUTED TO THEM MORE KNOWLEDGE OF COLOMBIAN VISITORS TO THE U. S. THAN THE COLOMBIAN VISITORS HAVE OF THEMSELVES. THE ARTICLE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT AMERICAN DETECTIVES SPEND 20 MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR IN COLOMBIA AS THE RESULT OF THEIR CONFIDENTIAL

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WORK. THE ARTICLE CONCLUDED, WITH A PARAGRAPH THAT IS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE TONE OF THE ENTIRE PIECE, " SO IF YOU' RE THINKING OF TRAVELLING TO THE U. S. WITHOUT YOUR WIFE, AVOID PROBLEMS AND BRING HER ALONG. THE FBI KNOWS ABOUT YOUR GIRLFRIEND TOO".

4. THE THIRD ARTICLE APPEARED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF EL TIEMPO ON APRIL 27,1973 UNDER THE HEADLINE, " BUENAVENTURA, BRIDGE FOR DRUGS". THIS ARTICLE CITED FBI AGENTS AND U. S. PRIVATE INSURANCE INVESTIGATORS

CONCERNING THE INADEQUATE SECURITY ON THE PORT OF BUENAVENTURA. THEY ARE QUOTED TO THE EFFECT THAT BUENAVENTURA COULD FILL THE ROLE ONCE PLAYED BY MARSEILLE OR MOROCCO AS THE MAJOR DRUG TRANSHIPMENT CENTER OF THE WORLD AND THAT IT MAY ALREADY HAVE BEEN TAKEN

OVER BY THE INTERNATIONAL MAFIA. THE ARTICLE PRESENTED SECTIONS OF A REPORT PREPARED BY TWO U. S. DETECTIVES CONCERNING THE SEIZURE OF THE THREE COLOMBIAN SHIPS" ADRIANA", " FRANCISCO MIGUEL", AND " FILIPE".

5. THE ARTICLE WENT ON TO DESCRIBE IN DETAIL THE PENETRATION OF VARIOUS SECURE AREAS IN THE PORT INCLUDING THE DOCK AREA AND ONE OF THE SHIPS TIED UP THERE AS EXAMPLES OF THE INADEQUATE SECURITY IN THE PORT. IN THIS INSTANCE THE TWO PROTAGONISTS WERE DESCRIBED AS " INVESTIGATORS" BUT BECAUSE OF EARLIER REFERENCES TO THE FBI IT IS DIFFICULT TO TELL WHETHER INSURANCE INVESTIGATORS OR FBI AGENTS WERE BEING REFERRED TO.

6. THE FOURTH ARTICLE, WHICH APPEARED IN EL TIEMPO ON APRIL 28, REPORTED THE DENIAL BY CIVIL AUTHORITIES IN BUENAVENTURA OF THE ASSERTIONS ATTRIBUTED TO THE TWO FBI AGENTS IN THE PREVIOUS ARTICLE. THE EDITION OF EL TIEMPO WHICH CARRIED THE ARTICLE WAS QUICKLY SOLD OUT IN BUENAVENTURA, AND EL TIEMPO REPORTED THAT THE CITIZENRY COMPLETELY REJECTED THE " FOREIGN CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE PORT AND THE CITY OF BUENAVENTURA". IN ADDITION, THE LOCAL MANAGER OF THE COLOMBIAN PORT AUTHORITY IN BUENAVENTURA, BRIGADIER GENERAL (RET) MARIO MEJILLA JARAMILLO, IS REPORTED TO HAVE STATED THAT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE FBI IN THIS INSTANCE REQUIRE CLARIFICATION. IF THEY ARE ENGAGED IN EITHER AN OFFICIAL OR UNOFFICIAL INVESTIGATION, HE SAID, THEY SHOULD WORK WITH COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES. HE CONTINUED, ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, THAT IF THEY WERE ENGAGED IN OFFICIAL CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTIVITIES THEY WERE VIOLATING COLOMBIAN SOVEREIGNTY.

7. IN THE FINAL ARTICLE ON THIS TOPIC TO DATE, EL ESPECTADOR OF APRIL 30 REPORTED AN INVESTIGATION BY THE GOVT OF THE PRESENCE OF THE FBI. IT QUOTED GENERAL MEJIA AT GREATER LENGTH, AGAIN CITING HIS CONCERN AT INVESTIGATIONS CARRIED ON IN COLOMBIA BY FOREIGN AGENTS WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OR KNOWLEDGE OF COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES.

8. IN A RECENT VISIT TO NATIONAL POLICE HEADQUARTERS, AN AID PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER WAS ASKED IF THERE WERE ANY TRUTH TO THESE REPORTS OF FBI ACTIVITIES AND HE REPLIED THAT THERE WAS NONE. THE POLICE OFFICER TO WHOM HE WAS SPEAKING INFORMED HIM THAT THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE HAD REQUESTED AN INVESTIGATION OF THE REPORTS OF FBI ACTIVITIES IN COLOMBIA.

9. IN A FURTHER DEVELOPMENT, THE COMMANDER OF THE NATIONAL CUSTOMS GUARD SERVICE, COL. JAIME RAMIREZ SOTO, WHO HAS BEEN QUITE FRIENDLY TO THE UNITED STATES AND HAS COOPERATED WITH NARCOTICS CONTROL EFFORTS, IS QUOTED AS CRITIZING THE PRESENCE OF U. S. AGENTS IN BUENAVENTURA. HE IS REPORTED BY RADIO TODELAR TO HAVE SAID THAT THE AGENTS, LIKE ANY COLOMBIAN CITIZEN ARE SUBJECT TO APPREHENSION BY THE IMMIGRATION DIVISION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE

DEPT OF SECURITY. THE RADIO BROADCAST ALSO REPORTED HIS INDIGNATION OVER THE MATTER AND QUOTES HIM FURTHER AS FOLLOWS: " I FIND THE PROCEDURE THESE GENTLEMEN HAVE USED TO ENTER COLOMBIAN TERRITORY HIGHLY IRREGULAR AND ABNORMAL", AND SAID THE FACT THAT AT NO TIME HAS THE NATIONAL GOVT BEEN OFFICIALLY NOTIFIED OF INVESTIGATION BY U. S. AGENTS MAKES THEIR ENTRY INTO COLOMBIA ILLEGAL.

10. THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE NATIONAL POLICE, HENRY GARCIA, INFORMED THE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER DURING A MEETING ON MAY 4, THAT HE HAD BEEN APPROACHED BY REPORTERS FROM EL TIEMPO WHO ASKED HIM IF FBI OR OTHER USG. AGENTS WERE CONDUCTING INVESTIGATIONS IN COLOMBIA. HE REPLIED THAT HE HAS VERY CLOSE AND CORDIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMPETENT EMB AUTHORITIES AND THAT THERE WERE NO U. S. AGENTS CONDUCTING INVESTIGATIONS AT THE PRESENT TIME. HE DID EMPHASIZE THE CONTINUING EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION WITH U. S. G. AGENCIES CONCERNED WITH NARCOTICS CONTROL.

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1. COMENT: THERE ARE NO FBI AGENTS IN COLOMBIA. THE LEGAL ATTACHE IN CARACAS OCCASIONALLY VISITS COLOMBIA BUT OPERATES THROUGH THE EMB WHEN IN COLOMBIA. IT APPEARS, HOWEVER, THAT THE PRESENCE OF BNDD, TREASURY AND CUSTOMS AGENTS AND THE NATURE OF THEIR WORK HAS THROWN FEDERAL AGENTS INTO MUCH CLOSER AND MORE FREQUENT CONTACT WITH COLOMBIAN OFFICIALS THAN HAS BEEN THE CASE IN THE PAST, AND THAT A CERTAIN FUZZINESS ABOUT THE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THESE DIFFERENT AGENCIES MAY HAVE LEAD COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES TO BELIEVE THAT THEY WERE DEALING WITH THE FBI. THE INVESTIGATION IN BUENAVENTURA ATTRIBUTED TO TWO FBI AGENTS WAS ACTUALLY CONDUCTED BY PRIVATE U. S. INSURANCE INVESTIGATORS.

12. EMB OFFICERS HAVE SPOKEN WITH SEVERAL MEDIA CONTACTS ABOUT THE MATTER. WE HAVE SAID THAT WE KNOW OF NO FBI AGENTS OPERATING IN COLOMBIA, THAT ALL U. S. OFFICIALS WORKING IN THE COUNTRY ON DRUGS WORK WITH THE COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES AND THAT FURTHER INQUIRIES CAN BE DIRECTED TO THE NATIONAL POLICE.
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